DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 991 CG 019 800

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TITLE Career Guidance, Families and School Counselors. Highlights: An ERIC/CAPS Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, Ann Arbor, Mich.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 86
CONTRACT 400-86-0014
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CAPS, University of Michigan, School of Education, Room 2108, 610 East University Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259 (free).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Career Development; *Career Guidance; Children; Counselor Role; Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family Influence; *Family School Relationship; Parent Influence; *School Counselors
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

The need for a collaborative effort between school and family in the area of career guidance is considered in this digest. Issues relevant to this effort are discussed, including family determinants of children's career development, stages of children's career development, counselor guidelines for starting parent programs, and counselor interventions to utilize family influence. Thirteen resource documents are listed. (NB)

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# Career Guidance, Families and School Counselors

Recent national surveys indicate that career guidance is a major issue for American families. In Gallup polls, for example, parents report that helping their children choose a career is their second most pressing concern. For the general public, understanding the world of work and making realistic plans for after high school are the third and sixth most important goals of education.

Students themselves, according to more than 33,000 sampled in 1973 and 1983 by the American College Testing Program, have increased their involvement in career planning activities. Among the eighth and eleventh graders in the 1983 study, over 70 percent said they want even more help with making career plans. Other research shows that parents play a primary role in children's career development, and that school counseling programs can benefit from tapping into this resource (Birk & Blimline, 1984; Daniels, Karmos, & Presley, 1983; Noeth, Engen, & Noeth, 1984; Otto, 1984; Otto & Call, 1985; Prediger & Sawyer, 1985).

In short, career guidance has a top priority with parents, the general public and high school students. Continuing and further assistance appears to be needed, and a collaborative effort between schools and families could help meet the need. This digest briefly considers the following issues relevant to this effort: family determinants of children's career development, stages of children's career development, counselor guidelines for starting parent programs, and counselor interventions to utilize family influence.

## Family Determinants of Children's Career Development

The major family determinants of children's career development can be categorized as follows: geographic location, genetic inheritance, family background, socio-economic status, family composition, parenting style, and parental attitudes toward work (Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). These factors influence the formation of children's self-concept, values and personality, a shaping process in which the parents' role is the most crucial. These personal qualities, in turn, exert a primary influence on initial career and education choices. As children go through this choice-making process, they form educational aspirations on the basis of self-assessments and feedback from significant others. Aspirations influence achievement, and it is the level of educational achievement which is the single most important determinant of eventual occupational achievement (Otto, 1984).

## Stages of Children's Career Development

In the early years of career development three basic stages occur: (1) awareness, up to age 11, when children believe they can do whatever they like and transform needs and desires into occupational preferences; (2) exploration, ages 11-17, when tentative choices are made on the basis of interest, abilities and values; and (3) preparation, age 17 to young adulthood, when actual choices are made that strike a balance between personal capabilities and such factors as educational and employment opportunities and job requirements (McDaniels & Hummel, 1984). Stereotypes and prejudices about the appropriateness of certain careers may need to be challenged throughout this process.

## Counselor Guidelines for Starting Parent Programs

School counselors can start involving parents in career guidance by creating a parent resource library, distributing lists of practical suggestions, and calling a parent group meeting to get the program off the ground. Laramore (1984) offers some practical guidelines for insuring the success of the involvement program:

1. Find someone to run the program who knows about the subject and is a clear, enthusiastic speaker.
2. Advertise the program as the parents' role in their children's educational and career future. If only "career" is mentioned, parents who expect their children to go to college are unlikely to attend.
3. Don't be discouraged if only two parents come the first time. Pretend it's a roomful and give it your all. The second year, there will be 50 parents; the third, 150, and so on.
4. Elementary and middle school/junior high parents often don't realize that this is the time to begin. Therefore, in the publicity, use phrases like, "Now is the time to start your child on her/his successful future."

## Counselor Interventions to Utilize Family Influence

Counselors can provide direct services to parents and children, both separately and together, as well as indirect services through classroom teachers, school and community committees, and a variety of activities. Useful examples include the following:

1. Conduct parent study groups. Counselors can help parents understand their role in children's career development, the general growth and development of their children, and the relationship between the career guidance program and the total school program. Specifically, parents need up-to-date, accurate information about the following: changing career choices and broadened options for males and females, educational opportunities, wage and salary statistics, the importance and stages of career

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planning, barriers to the career development process, career resources in the school and community, myths in sex-role stereotyping, sex equity laws, and ways to improve communication skills (Birk & Blimline, 1984).

2. Coordinate parent resources. Programs can be developed in which parents serve as mini-course instructors or resource persons in the classroom, teacher aides on field trips, members of advisory committees, technical advisors to counselors and teachers on developing simulated work settings, and members of curriculum development committees. Counselors can also assist parents to assume liaison roles between the school and the working community, especially in the parents' own places of employment (Navin & Sears, 1980).

3. Organize career activities for families. Career nights appear to be one of the most popular activities at the high school level, although some authorities in career development question the value of a single event in a process that occurs over a number of years. Additional suggestions include parent/student workshops to facilitate career discussions, self-directed career centers for use by both parents and children, and student/parent handbooks for personal educational and vocational planning (Castricone, Finan, & Gumble, 1982; Daniels, et al., 1983).

4. Conduct student sessions on family influence. For many students, as they begin to deal with issues of autonomy and independence, it is important to sort out family influences on their career development. Counselors can help in this process through a variety of techniques that are suitable for individual and group counseling or for coursework. These include: family systems review, paradigms of family interaction, family sculpting/choreography, family constellation diagrams, occupational family trees, and "advice, advice, and more advice"--an exploration of parental work values (Splete & Freeman-George, 1985).

Interventions involving parents can benefit the parents' own career development. Dissatisfied with their career choices or interested in changing direction, they can learn career planning skills which are useful for themselves (Amatea & Cross, 1980). In doing so, they may become better career counselors for their children, as well as provide a model for adaptability and flexibility in a rapidly changing work world.

## Conclusion

Research has already demonstrated that comprehensive career guidance programs can provide students with basic economic understandings, skills in understanding themselves and educational/occupational opportunities, and skills in overcoming bias and stereotyping. Evidence is also promising that students can acquire increases in basic academic skills, a desire to work, career decision-making skills, and job-seeking/finding/getting/holding skills (Hoyt, 1984). Through collaborative efforts in career guidance, counselors can help parents influence their children's career development more effectively and wisely, and together they may all succeed in turning the promises of research into reality.

## Resource Documents


Amatea, E. S., & Cross, E. G. (1980). Going places: A career guidance program for high school students and their parents. *The Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 28*(3), 274-282. (EJ 223 188)

Birk, J. M., & Blimline, C. A. (1984). Parents as career development facilitators: An untapped resource for the counselor. *The School Counselor, 31*(4), 310-317. (EJ 301 070)

Castricone, A. M., Finan, W. W., & Gumble, S. K. (1982). Focus on career search: A program for high school students and their parents. *The School Counselor, 29*(5), 411-414. (EJ 262 934)

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Hoyt, K. B. (1984). Helping parents understand career education. *Journal of Career Education, 10*(4), 216-224. (EJ 300 986)

Laramore, D. (1984). Parents' role in the education and career decision-making process. *Journal of Career Education, 10*(4), 214-215. (EJ 300 985)

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Navin, S. L., & Sears, S. J. (1980). Parental roles in elementary career guidance. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 14*(4), 268-277. (EJ 223 240)

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Otto, L. B. (1984). Bringing parents back in. *Journal of Career Education, 10*(4), 255-265. (EJ 300 991)

Otto, L. B., & Call, V. R. A. (1985). Parental influence on young people's career development. *Journal of Career Development, 12*(1), 65-69. (EJ 324 895)

Prediger, D. J., & Sawyer, R. L. (1985, April). *Ten years of student career development: A nationwide study.* Paper presented at the convention of the American Association for Counseling and Development, New York. (ED 261 182)

Splete, H., & Freeman-George, A. (1985). Family influences on career development of young adults. *Journal of Career Development, 12*(1), 55-64. (EJ 324 894)



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1986


This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-86-0014. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.